A Report

On the State of Missions in Russian Tartary

Russian Tartary, is that region of country which lies between the Caspian & Black seas, having Russia Proper on the N. West & the Khalian mountains on the N. & N. East. It is between 42° & 55° N. L. & between 35° & 60° E. Lon.

The religion of the inhabitants, is of different kinds: but principally Mohamedan: They have their Effendis or doctors, & their Mollahs or priests, to instruct them in the principles of the Koran.

It may be said of the Tartars, in general, that they are naturally easy & cheerful, & seldom ever experience care or melancholy. They are very hospitable to one another, & kind even to strangers who put themselves under their protection. The various tribes of these Tartars form wandering hordes, & live in tents, which they remove, according to the temperature of the season, or the wants of their flocks require. They live in their tents, amid the dirt & filth of their flocks, & are naturally enemies of labour. Having will not take the trouble of cultivating the earth, it would seem from a principle of pride. For when the Missionaries

Written by Thomson S. Harris

asked them why they did not at least cultivate some gardens, they answered "that the grass was for beasts, & beasts for man".

The following are extracts from Brown's history of missions.

"The first attempt to introduce christianity among the Calmuc Tartars, was made by the U. Brethren who, in 1765. sent out several missionaries, to establish a colony in the kingdom of Astrachan. Having arrived at St. Petersburg, they proceeded on their journey, in company with an imperial Aulic counsellor, by the way of Moscow: & after travelling near 2000 miles, they arrived at a place about 24 miles below Tzaritzin on the Wolga where they resolved to fix their residence. This place they called Sarepta."

"Since their settlement in this place, the Brethren have made various attempts to introduce the gospel among them: but hitherto, with little appearance of success." If a missionary grow warm in speaking to them on the subject of religion, they laugh at him for what they call his weakness; for according to them, one of the greatest virtues, is to remain cool & composed on every occasion, & under all circumstances. & hence they endeavour to throw their opponent off his guard, by smiling & provoking expressions.

Finding that so little could be effected among the older Calmucs, the Brethren have of late turned their attention to the education of their children. In 1804. the Kirgisian Tartars were reduced to such straits for the necessaries of life, that they offered to

sell their children: & on this occasion the court of Petersburg proposed to purchase a number of them: & to send them to Sarepta to be trained up in the principles of Christianity & the arts of civilized life. To this proposal the Brethren readily consented, offering to take 40 or 50 of these children; but this measure, for what reason does not appear, was never carried into effect. In 1808. however, the brethren themselves ransomed 4 girls from the Kirgisian Tartars: & having had the satisfaction of seeing them grow up in the fear of the Lord, they baptized them two years afterwards.

These, and a poor Calmuc girl left to perish on the road, about 30 years before who was brought into the settlement; & trained up in the Christian faith, are the only individuals of the Tartar nation, who they have received into the church. The Brethren, however have been visited by many of the German colonists, who have settled in great numbers on the Wolga, & have been of considerable use to them, particularly in providing most of them with christian ministers. Of late they have also begun a translation of the N. Testament into the Calmuc language; & by the last accounts they had finished the gospel of Matthew

The next attempt to christianize the Calmuck Tartars, was made by the Rev. Henry Brunton & Mr. Alexander Pattieson, who were sent on an exploratory mission in 1821 by the Edinr. Miss. Society to the countries lying between the Caspian and Black seas. Having proceeded by the way of Petersburg they met with so many difficulties & discouragements on their arrival at that city, that they almost despaired of obtaining liberty to travel through the Russian Empire: but they unexpectedly found a friend in the person of M. Navassilyoff a nobleman in the confidence of the Emperor & a lord of his bed-chamber. — Through the influence of this gentleman, the missionaries were permitted to pass through the country under very favourable circumstances. Letters of recommendation were given them to the principal civil & military officers through the country: post horses were ordered for their use, & they were supplied with every convenience of conveying them to their place of destination. They proceeded on their journey with every mark of respect shown them, by the inhabitants of the different places through which they passed until Lenkoy arrived in Tartary, they took up their residence at a village called Karass. It is situated on the East side of the largest of the 3 mountains called Besh-Tau in about 43° N. Lat. & 61° E. Lon. It contained upwards of 500 Inhabitants, all of whom were Mohamedans.

From this place the missionaries wrote to their friend M. Novosilzoff at court, soliciting certain grants of land: by cultivating which they might be able to raise the necessaries of life & thus support themselves independently of the natives: & also certain other privileges, relative to the ransoming of slaves from the Tartars: that having them in their possession for a time, they might thus train them up in the principles of the christian religion: To all which requests, a gracious answer was returned.

The Society, encouraged by these favourable circumstances, sent out in 1803 a reinforcement, consisting of 5 missionaries some of whom were married: & the family of Mr Brunton, in all 15 persons. Having arrived in Petersburg they were treated with every expression of kindness, by M. Novosilzoff; & other friends of the mission in that city. From him they were furnished with letters to the officers of the several provinces, through which they were to direct their course, together with a government courier & interpreter. Thus equipped, they set off for Karass & arrived there in about 10 weeks in perfect safety.

In the meanwhile Brunton & Pattieson had been diligently employed in learning the Tar-

tar language, which differs from the Turkish chiefly in this, that the latter is enriched with numbers of words from the Arabic & Persic. Having written & circulated several short addresses on the subject of religion, they excited a great deal of conversation concerning the claims of Christ & Mohammed, throughout Circassia & the neighbouring parts of Tartary. —— Some of the effendis frankly confessed, that they were unable to answer the arguments of the missionaries; but still they showed no inclination to embrace the truth, & were even averse to enter into any kind of discussion concerning the evidences of their religion. ... —

In the summer of 1814, the plague made its appearance in the neighborhood of Karass: but the Tartars owing to their abuse of the doctrine of predestination, neglected to take any precaution against its ravages: they endeavoured also to conceal it as much as possible from the missionaries: & even threatened any person with death who should tell them of it; & when a party of Cossacks were sent to ascertain intelligence respecting it, they positively denied that they knew any thing of its approach; although it was that moment raging in a neighbouring village. A war at the same time broke out between the Russians & Kabardians which occasioned the missionaries much anxiety. They were compelled frequently to sleep with their clothes on, for fear of an attack from the

enemy. And on one occasion they had 3 of their horses carried off by a party of plundering Kabardians. In consequence of these circumstances, they judged it proper to leave Karass for the present. This they did & retired to a Russian Fort about 32 Versts distant. To add to these distressing circumstances, death had entered the missionary family; & carried off 6 of their number among whom were some of its most useful members. But it was not long before the Lord raised up others to supply the ranks [illegible] of those who had fallen.

In May 1805 the Society sent out 4 new missionaries to Tartary, viz. John Mitchell, Robert Pinkerton, George Mc Alpine, & James Galloway; two of whom previous to their departure had learned the art of printing; and besides other useful articles, they took with them a printing press & a font of Arabic types, which is a character generally used in that country. On their arrival at Karass whither the missionaries had again returned, they lost no time in erecting the press, & in employing that powerful engine, for the propagation of christianity in the country. The first work which they printed, was a small tract in the Turkish language, against Mohammedanism written by Mr Brunton, who appears to have possessed a very correct knowledge of that lan-

guage. .. — " — "

In March 1810. the number of the missionary family amounted to 39. Besides these there were a number of German colonists, who had come into the settlement. .. — .

The missionaries had now circulated a considerable number of tracts through the country, & by this means had excited a spirit of inquiry among the people. The chiefs, however, were hostile to their circulation & prohibited their subjects from reading them under the severest penalty. -

The Mahomedan tribes, to the south of Kaffa displayed the most furious enthusiasm in support of their religion. Inspired with a bloody zeal, they threatened destruction, to all who bore the christian name. Paradise, with all its sensual delights, was preached up, with more than ordinary earnestness by the effendis & Mollahs: & in consequence of this, a considerable number of the people had already sacrificed their lives, in fighting for the religion of their prophet. The missionaries were in a particular manner the object of their rage & malice; & they had lately employed means to destroy them; but owing to certain unforeseen causes; their malignant designs were happily disappointed. Though their enemies acknowledged that they were a quiet, inoffensive people, they complained that they were zealous in endeavouring to reform the people. .. — .. —

In March 1813. Mr Brunton departed this life

after a painful illness of several weeks. He was a man of vigorous intellect: & possessed an uncommon facility in acquiring languages. & in this respect was highly useful as a missionary; but it is painful to add, that his conduct was often such as did not accord with the gospel of Christ; & towards the close of his life, he became a disgrace to the cause in which he was engaged. Let not the infidel triumph in the fall of poor Brunton: let the Christian shed a tear over his memory; & "let him that thinketh he standeth, he standeth take heed lest he fall."

In August 1814. the number of the inhabitants of the missionary settlement at Karass amounted to 154 persons. Viz. 25 British, 6 of whom were missionaries: 18 natives & 122 germans. Since the establishment of the mission 27 natives have been raised and 10 of whom have been baptized. Of this number 5 have died. some of whom, there was reason to hope, departed in the faith of Christ.

The following are extracts from the report of the Edinburgh Miss.y Society of 1817. which is the latest intelligence that I have been able to procure. This Report mentions three principal stations. Karass. Astrachan and

the Wolga, & Orenburg which is situated on the
& is the great thoroughfare from Siberia to Europe
rivers Ural. ——— In the first of these stations Mr
Kam Keys. Moran. Patterson & James Galloway were
labouring. In the second, the Rev. Mr. Glen.
John Mitchell & John Dickson, assisted by
James Reddie & Andrew Hunter two ransomed youths. And in the last, C. Fraser, G.
Mc. Alpine, & Walter Buchanan, a converted
Kabardian. . . ———— "

"The most interesting information, says this report received from Karass, received since our last anniversary, relates to the Turkomen or Turcomans; whom Mr. Galloway visited in the month of October. The Turkomen are a nomadic & pastoral tribe of the Tartars, who inhabit chiefly the great Kirghisian Steppe between the Kuma & Torek, eastward from Karass towards the Caspian. Their language approaches nearer to the Turkish, than that of the other Tartars; & in consequence of the nature of their occupation, their spirit is less precious, & their habits more gentle & domestic. During Mr. Galloway's visit to them, on which he was accompanied by John Steele, one of the ransomed boys, he was highly gratified with the reception which they gave equally to his instructions, & to the copies of the N. Testament & tracts, which he took along with him for distribution. The east in which he travelled was for some days constantly cov-

rounded by crowds, earnestly requesting books; & saying with every appearance of deep interest, that they wished to know the way of salvation. And when some of the Kara Nogays, another tribe who wander about like the Trukmens, & who are perhaps the most bigoted Mohamedans of all the Tartars, endeavoured to persuade them not to receive such books, because they did not agree with the Koran, the Trukmens told them that they (viz. the Nogays) were ignorant persons, & that the books recommended to them by those who knew more than they. ——"

The importance which the directors have been led to attach to Astrachan, both as a central station for missionary exertion & as the seat of an establishment for translating & printing the Scriptures in the various languages of Asiatic Russia, has been fully justified by every months intelligence, which, during the last year, they have received from their missionaries.

"The labours of Mr. Michell & his coadjutor, James Radie, at the missionary press, & of Mr. Dickson in revising, correcting & translating, have been such as to merit the highest commendation.

when it is considered, that these have been the only constant & efficient labourers at this post of duty; & that besides having to attend the instruction of their own families; they have had to converse, almost daily, & often for hours together with Persians & others who have visited them with the view of obtaining copies of the new Testament, & information concerning the truths of christianity, some estimate may be formed of their activity, & diligence & zeal from the following statement, of what they have published to accomplish within the short space of a twelve-month. — During that period, viz from Jan.ry 1. 1816 to Jan.ry 1. 1817. there have issued from the missionary press

800 copies of a Turkish tract concerning the first chapters of Genesis in

800 Copies of an Arabic tract containing 20th chapter of Exodus & 5th chapter of Matthew.

2000 Copies of an Arabic tract for the Orenburg mission ... ...

4000 Copies of a Tartar Catechism, for the Kirghisians &c. at Orenburg &

5000 Copies of Luke's gospel, of the Khasi translation, for the Russian bible society; making in all 14.600 of various religious publications ... ...

During the same period they have bound & prepared for distribution 900 copies of the Psalms in Turkish (printed the preceding year) 1134 of

the Kanas N. Testament; 3400 of the gospel by Luke; besides stocking &c the Catechisms & tracts." —

"Nor have these publications been suffered to lie beside them undisposed of, or unused; for with the addition of the above of about 600 copies of the Scriptures in various languages received for distribution from the Russian bible society, they have sold, or circulated gratis sent to Kanas, to Orenburg, to the government of Cherson, To Theodosia & Symphropol in the Crimea, or given to the bible committee in Astrachan, no fewer than 2566 copies of the N. Testament in whole or in part, or portions of the O. Testament together with 6548 catechisms or tracts in all 9114 copies. — " — "

"The number, say the missionaries is much greater than we expected it would have been & when we consider, that many copies of the holy Scriptures, have been issued by the Astrachan bible committee also, we cannot but rejoice, that so much of the precious seed of the word of life has been scattered in these barren regions" Yes, and in regions it may be added, continues this report, a little more than 12 months ago, the sound of the Gospel, was scarcely known

& many of the miserable & blinded natives, were almost as ignorant of the very existence of such a volume as the Bible as if it had never been published among men. ... —" —

"Through the medium of the Astrachan committee, & by the constant co-operation of the missionaries with the Russian-Bible society & its now numerous & daily increasing branches, in the southern providences of the empire & the Taurician Peninsula, a door is indeed set open, & we trust by God himself, for the circulation of the scriptures: & if He shall keep it open, as we perpetually implore that he will, no man will be able to shut it, till throughout the widely extended region of which Astrachan is the centre, the people of every region, & language & tribe, to the east & to the west, to the north & the south hear & receive in their own tongues, the inspired record of the wonderful works of God."

"The intelligence from Orenburg, though perhaps, not so interesting, on account of its novelty, as it was last year, is such as to give no discouragement to the hopes which were then entertained with regard to the Kirghisians. Among those ignorant & degraded tribes, to the great [illegible] to the East & South of that city, Mr. M. Alpine with his constant & zealous attendant Walter Buchanan, the converted Kabardian,

have been unremittingly continuing their labours; the progress which some of them notwithstanding all their disadvantages arising from natural indolence, acquired listlessness & deplorable poverty, have made in religious knowledge, is one of the most gratifying circumstances, which can be conceived. Several of the most intelligent of them are steady in their attachment to the missionaries, earnest in listening to their instructions, & most solicitous to bring their neighbours & acquaintance, to hear the truths, which they themselves openly acknowledge to be the truths of God. — Perhaps, however, it cannot be yet, be said that any of them has given decided evidence of genuine conversion to the faith and holiness of the gospel. But all who had discontinued the observance of the stated Mohammedan sacrifices, have remained firm in the renunciation of their superstitious service; & were there only more missionaries among them, of whom some might particularly devote their attention to the young, great things might be expected, through the accompanying influences of divine Grace, from the favourable disposition, which they have a-

uniformly & unswervingly disposed to attend to the message of reconciliation by Jesus Christ" " "